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Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the management of special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/255, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the management of special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs. The main objectives of OIOS were to: (a) assess the Department's ability to guide and manage special political missions; (b) review the appropriateness of related policies and procedures; and (c) determine the sufficiency of internal controls.

Special political missions play a key role in the prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, including post-conflict peacebuilding, and are an integral part of the Department's mandate. Therefore, the success of special political missions is largely based on the policy and managerial guidance provided by the Department and the effectiveness of relevant oversight and accountability mechanisms. In addition, recent developments within the Organization, such as the expansion of the responsibilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, require that all activities related to special political missions be aligned and coordinated to ensure that duplication and overlap are minimized, resources are utilized efficiently and effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms are established.

According to the results of the surveys and interviews conducted by OIOS with the selected heads of special political missions, the Department's ability to backstop the missions appears to be satisfactory. Its ability to recruit in a timely manner qualified personnel for the missions is improving, as vacancy rates decreased from 43 per cent in June 2005 to 35 per cent in May 2006. The Department's ability to provide political and substantive policy guidance to the missions and to equip the Department's desk officers with management tools, however, needed significant

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improvement. Also, the Department's budget controls were inadequate, since they were not formalized or comprehensively reviewed at the departmental level.

The number of complaints raised by special political missions about the effectiveness of the Department's support is the only performance indicator to measure its managerial performance in the Department's results-based budget framework, which OIOS considers to be insufficient.

The mandates of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations have not been updated and do not accurately reflect their current roles and responsibilities. The mandate of the Department of Political Affairs as the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peacebuilding needs to reflect the recent inauguration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The mandate of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also needs to be updated to reflect the expansion of its responsibilities for directing special political missions in addition to peacekeeping field missions.

The decision to assign the "lead responsibility" for field special political missions to one Department or another is taken by the Policy Committee, a body established by the Secretary-General in 2005 to focus on strategic decisions, and guided by the lead-department policy promulgated by the Secretary-General. There are no clear criteria or transparent decision-making mechanisms, however, to determine the lead department. In the opinion of OIOS, such a situation increases the risk of misunderstandings among the parties involved concerning their roles and responsibilities. Clear criteria need to be developed for transparency.

The proposed structure of the Peacebuilding Support Office could lead to duplication and overlap with the Department of Political Affairs, which needs to clarify its working relationship with the Office to maximize synergies and coordination and prevent possible duplication and overlap. The mandate of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also needs to be updated to reflect the expansion of its responsibilities for directing special political missions in addition to peacekeeping field missions.

There is an inherent risk of duplication and overlap regarding the functions of the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of Operations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Both Departments can be assigned the lead role for directing the substantive political operations of field missions. Therefore, resources of both Departments could be dedicated to performing the same tasks and exceed those required for the current levels of performance. OIOS noted a high risk of duplication and overlap in countries in which there were both peacekeeping missions and special political missions/special envoys of the Secretary-General, as is the case of Cyprus, Western Sahara and Kosovo.

The Secretary-General has recognized the risk of duplication and overlap and issued the lead-department policy with measures to minimize their occurrence. Measures such as the creation of an interdepartmental task force and the development of the coordination methodology by the lead department, however, have not been sufficiently implemented.

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I. Introduction

1. As requested in General Assembly resolution 60/255, section I, paragraph 14, and outlined in paragraph 16 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.37), the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a management audit of the Department of Political Affairs on its ability to manage and direct special political missions with a view to ensuring an efficient use of both post and non-post resources. The major objectives of the audit were to determine whether: (a) the Department properly managed and directed the missions to ensure the efficient use of resources; (b) policies and procedures for managing and directing the missions were adequate; and (c) sufficient internal control and accountability mechanisms were in place.

2. Special political missions, which are an integral part of the mandate of the Department, play a key role in preventing, controlling and resolving conflicts, including post-conflict peacebuilding. Their success is largely based on the policy and managerial guidance provided by the Department and the effectiveness of its oversight and accountability mechanisms. The expansion of responsibilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office highlighted the issue of coordination among the stakeholders in peacebuilding operations and the need to minimize duplication and overlap.

3. The audit conducted by OIOS focused on the management of the entities funded under section 3B of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/60/6 (sect. 3)), in particular special political missions.[1] Section 3B covered a total of 3,085 posts, consisting of 1,012 international posts, 241 National Officers, 1,738 local posts and 94 United Nations Volunteers in 29 entities (see A/60/585, table 3). The programme budget proposed for the Department of Political Affairs for the biennium 2006-2007 totalled $441.3 million, comprising $429.4 million from the regular budget, including $355.9 million for special political missions and $11.9 million from extrabudgetary resources. In its report on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/60/7/Add.37), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended approval of some $303 million for special political missions.

II. Roles and responsibilities in managing and directing special political missions

A. Mandates and policies

Need to update the mandates of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations for managing and directing field missions

4. At the time of the audit, the Department of Political Affairs provided executive direction for the political and substantive activities of 10 field special political missions, whereas the Department of Peacekeeping Operations directed the

[1] There is no official definition of a special political mission. The Department of Political Affairs considers 14 field entities special political missions.

substantive operations of 4 field missions and provided logistical and administrative support to all 14.

5. While the mandate of the Department of Political Affairs defined its responsibilities for managing and directing special political missions, the mandate of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has not been updated to reflect its current role and responsibilities for leading field missions other than peacekeeping missions. According to the Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of the Department of Political Affairs (ST/SGB/2000/10, sect. 3.2), that Department is responsible for managing and directing special political missions on behalf of the Secretary-General.

6. The mandate of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is to serve as the operational arm of the Secretary-General for all United Nations peacekeeping operations and is responsible for conducting, managing, directing and planning those operations (ST/SGB/2000/9, sect. 2.1 (a)).

7. The core function of the Department's Office of Operations is to provide day-to-day executive direction of peacekeeping operations, including substantive guidance to the field and coordinating and integrating inputs from other offices within the Department as well as from other departments, agencies and programmes (ibid., sect. 5.3 (a)). The Office is not specifically assigned substantive responsibility for special political missions.

8. The mandate of the Department of Political Affairs, which states that the Department is the focal point within the United Nations for post-conflict peacebuilding, has not been updated to reflect the recent establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, which will play a key role in post-conflict peacebuilding by bringing together all relevant actors "to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery".[2] Of the 10 special political missions that the Department manages and directs, three are field offices providing peacebuilding support in particular countries.

Lack of clear criteria for assigning lead responsibility for field missions

9. The policy for assigning the lead responsibility for the substantive operations of field missions to one of the Department's lacked clear criteria and was not consistently applied. Member States may also not be well informed about the policy owing to a lack of visibility in its promulgation, resulting in a lack of transparency in decision-making and confusion concerning the roles and responsibilities of the two Departments.

10. The Secretary-General has assigned both Departments the role of managing and directing substantive operations of field special political missions (see tables 3 and 4 below). Therefore, as long as the two Departments remain separate, there will be a need to clearly delineate their roles and responsibilities in order to ensure effective implementation of the Secretary-General's strategy while minimizing duplication and overlap.

11. The Secretary-General had acknowledged and attempted to address that need by promulgating the "lead-department" policy, which was first introduced in 1999

[2] See General Assembly resolution 60/180, para. 2 (a).

(A/53/854/Add.1) and further developed in 2002 (A/57/387). The policy was intended to assign management responsibility for substantive operations of field missions to only one department based on certain criteria to ensure that accountability would be addressed by having that department bear the ultimate responsibility for successful implementation of field mission mandates, and the efficient and effective use of budget resources allocated to them; duplication would be minimized in managing field missions; coordination and cooperation would be optimized by making the lead department responsible for ensuring that the other department was fully included in the planning and decision-making and that its views were heard.

12. The criteria formulated in the 1999 report of the Secretary-General (A/53/854/Add.1) were based on the mandates of the two Departments. The Department of Political Affairs was to take the lead in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was to lead peacekeeping. Those criteria have not always been complied with, however, as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has led missions that do not clearly involve peacekeeping, such as the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the future status process for Kosovo, and the Department of Political Affairs has led the early negotiation phases of some peacekeeping missions.

13. Various staff members of the two Departments informed OIOS that, in addition to the criterion formulated in the lead-department policy, the logistical support capacity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the presence of military components and the nature of the residual tasks from the peacekeeping operation mandates that had to be completed by the remaining components weighed in as criteria in determining the lead department. Likewise, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is the lead department for three field missions — the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), UNOTIL and UNIOSIL — because they are integrated missions in which cadres of military observers, military liaison officers and United Nations police are deployed, and only that Department has the logistical capacity to support such elements. OIOS did not, however, identify any guidelines explaining the size of the military presence and the nature of operations that determine which should be the lead department. Staff members of the Department of Political Affairs noted that the criteria formulated in the lead-department policy were unclear and unfair, since their department did not have any logistical support capacity. OIOS is in no position to comment on the assertion of "unfairness", but notes that the inability of that Department to carry out its mandate because of the lack of support capacity is a source of frustration.

14. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is led by the Department of Political Affairs on an exceptional basis, whereas the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would normally lead such a complex operation. Both Departments pointed out that, although it was initially decided to assign the lead responsibility to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the bombing of the United Nations office in Baghdad resulted in a greater focus on the political nature of the mandate rather than the complexity of the operation.

15. With the establishment of the Policy Committee by the Secretary-General in 2005, OIOS noted a significant improvement in terms of transparency and

effectiveness in the decision-making process for assigning the lead-department role for special political missions. The Committee, a body at the level of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General charged with making strategic guidance decisions and identifying emerging issues, is chaired by the Secretary-General and assigns the lead responsibility for managing field missions. Notwithstanding such improvements, OIOS believes that the Secretary-General should develop and disseminate clear criteria for assigning the lead-department role in managing missions.

B. Categorization of special political missions and the responsibilities of the Department of Political Affairs

Lack of a clear definition of special political missions and the role of the Department of Political Affairs in budgetary documents

16. There was no clear definition of special political mission in existing policy and procedural documents. All 29 work programmes under section 3B were shown as special political missions in the official budget documents, although the Department of Political Affairs considers only 14 field entities special political missions. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has requested a logical categorization of the work programmes in budget submissions. OIOS divided special political missions into five groups based on the level of responsibilities required from the Department of Political Affairs.

17. The Department of Political Affairs is ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of the mandates of those missions for which it is designated as the lead department. It is also responsible for defining the level of budget resources required, including the number and level of posts, and for the efficient and effective use of the budget resources allocated to those missions. Work programmes for all but seven entities under section 3B of the proposed budget fall under the Department's core mandate, which emphasizes its responsibility for prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, including post-conflict peacebuilding. However, its relationship to and responsibilities for work programmes varied from one special political mission to another.

18. The lead responsibility for administering the six entities categorized under group 1 rests with the Department of Political Affairs, as indicated in table 1. The entities are sanctions committees and expert groups established by the Security Council that report directly to it. They do not require direction from the Secretariat, while the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department provides some input and assistance in political and substantive matters. Their budgets ranged from $0.7 million to $3.4 million for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006.

Table 1
Group 1: sanctions committees and expert groups

Entity	*Lead department*	*Administrative support*	*2006 budget[1] (United States dollars)*
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 453 300
Monitoring Group on Somalia	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 626 600
Panel of Experts on Liberia	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 460 600
Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 477 900[2]
Panel of Experts concerning the Sudan	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 725 700
Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	700 700[3]
Total			**10 453 800**

[1] Budget estimates are taken from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.37).
[2] For 10 months of 2006.
[3] For 8 months of 2006.

19. The six entities categorized as group 2 (see table 2 below) include good offices, fact-finding and peacemaking activities initiated by the Secretary-General with the approval of the Security Council and/or the General Assembly. The Department of Political Affairs is the lead department in providing substantive direction and administrative support for these entities. It is also responsible for defining the level of resources and for the efficient and effective administration of their budgets, which ranged from $0.2 million to $1.4 million for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006.

Table 2
Group 2: special envoys and advisers of the Secretary-General

Entity	*Lead department*	*Administrative support*	*2006 budget[1] (United States dollars)*
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Myanmar	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	210 400
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	209 700
Special Adviser of the Secretary General on Cyprus	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	406 300
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	868 700

Entity	Lead department	Administrative support	2006 budget[a] (United States dollars)
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	357 300
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Political Affairs	1 467 700
Total			**3 540 100**

[a] Budget estimates are taken from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.17).

20. The 10 entities categorized under group 3 (see table 3 below) are field missions located in various countries in order to implement their mandates in peacebuilding and other political areas. Their budgets ranged from $1.6 million to $12.2 million for calendar year 2006 and consisted of from 14 to 169 posts. While UNAMI, which has a budget of $173 million and 843 posts for the period, has a full administrative structure like a peacekeeping field mission, other group 3 missions do not, because their size and budgets do not provide the economies of scale permitting full administrative structures.

Table 3
Group 3: field missions led by the Department of Political Affairs

Entity	Lead department	Administrative support	2006 budget[a] (United States dollars)
United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	1 226 200
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	2 151 200
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	173 376 200
United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	2 170 600
Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Lebanon	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	1 698 600
United Nations support to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	7 339 000
United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	6 467 400

Entity	*Lead department*	*Administrative support*	*2006 budget[a] (United States dollars)*
United Nations Political Office for Somalia	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	7 129 200
Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	4 150 400
United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri	Department of Political Affairs	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	12 298 400[b]
Total			**220 007 200**

[a] Budget estimates are taken from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.37).

[b] For 5.5 months of 2006.

21. The Department of Political Affairs is the lead department providing political and substantive direction for group 3 missions and is responsible for defining the level of post and non-post resources for new missions. For existing missions, the Department, together with the heads of mission, is responsible for these functions and has distributed its responsibilities among its four regional divisions. Once the Department of Political Affairs determines the requirements for post resources, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations provides logistical and administrative support to these missions in recruitment and other activities. In utilizing non-post resources, the field missions execute expenditures and conduct local procurement up to the authorized levels delegated by the Controller. For transactions exceeding those levels, the intervention of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is required. For the three field missions that did not receive a delegation of authority, the respective United Nations Development Programme country office processes transactions on the behalf of the mission.

22. Prior to January 2005, the Department of Political Affairs provided logistical and administrative support to some of the field missions, and as such performed functions that had already been assigned to the Office of Mission Support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In that regard, the Department of Political Affairs had accepted and fully implemented an earlier OIOS recommendation to transfer responsibility for logistical and administrative support for all existing and future field missions to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations effective January 2005 (AH/2003/30/1). However, during the current audit, OIOS found that, although some initial discussions had taken place, no terms of reference or operational agreements had been developed to address the accountability and monitoring issues.

23. The four entities categorized as group 4 are field missions carrying out complex operations with integrated multidisciplinary mandates, consisting of military, police and other components as well as political tasks mandated by the Security Council. Their budgets ranged from $8.7 million to $23.2 million for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006. The Department of Peacekeeping

Operations is the lead department for these entities and provides political and substantive direction. Within the Department, the Office of Operations takes the political and substantive lead role and the Office of Mission Support provides logistical and administrative support functions. The Department is responsible for determining the level of post and non-post resources for new missions. For existing missions, there is joint responsibility with the heads of missions.

Table 4
Group 4: field missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Entity	*Lead department*	*Administrative support*	*2006 budget[a] (United States dollars)*
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the future status process for Kosovo	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	8 782 300
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	13 616 900[b]
United Nations Office in Timor-Leste	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	13 584 800[c]
United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Department of Peacekeeping Operations	23 298 600
Total			**59 282 600**

[a] Budget estimates are taken from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.37).

[b] For the first three months of 2006, $59,835,200 were budgeted for the period from 1 April to 31 December 2006 (A/60/7/Add.39).

[c] For 4.75 months of 2006.

24. The Department of Political Affairs does not have a reporting relationship for the three entities in group 5, which are activities established by the Security Council to service and support its sub-organs. The Department for Disarmament Affairs is responsible for the administration of budgeted resources for support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The Department of Management administers the budgeted resources for the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General to the International Advisory and Monitoring Board. The Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate is a stand-alone entity with its own administrative capacity.

Table 5
Group 5: entities led by departments other than the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Entity	*Lead department*	*Administrative support*	*2006 budget[a] (United States dollars)*
Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate	Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate	Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate	7 579 700
Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)	Department for Disarmament Affairs	Department for Disarmament Affairs	2 181 700
Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General to the International Advisory and Monitoring Board	Department of Management	Department of Management	306 500
Total			**10 067 900**

[a] Budget estimates are taken from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.37).

25. As discussed above, departments other than the Department of Political Affairs were responsible for leading seven entities in groups 4 and 5. The proposed budget for the Department (A/60/6, sect. 3), however, indicated that it was responsible for all 29 entities under section 3B. This budget provision does not accurately depict the actual responsibilities of the departments involved and may generate the perception that the Department of Political Affairs does not fully carry out its responsibilities, while other departments are duplicating and overlapping those functions.

III. Oversight and control of the Department of Political Affairs over the budget resources of special political missions

26. The audit concluded that the ability of the Department of Political Affairs to manage special political missions to ensure efficient use of post and non-post resources was hampered by the Department's lack of oversight and inadequate controls over mission budget resources. *In this regard, the Department of Political Affairs commented that it had inadequate human and financial resources to carry out its mandated responsibilities. This was also one of the principal findings of the in-depth evaluation (E/AC.51/2006/4) of the Department carried out recently by OIOS at the request of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.*

27. The OIOS audit focused on the Department's internal controls in assessing and monitoring the budgets of special political missions for the 10 field missions in group 3, for which all 165 additional posts had been requested.

28. The budgetary controls were adequate in respect of UNAMI. Five desk officers of the Department of Political Affairs were assigned to assist and backstop the unusually challenging tasks facing UNAMI, in which involvement of senior officers

of the Department and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General was clearly evidenced. However, the Department did not adequately perform oversight of the remaining nine field missions because of the lack of clarity on its responsibilities and those of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which led to misunderstanding by some staff members of the Department of Political Affairs about which office should perform the necessary oversight for the mission budgets, given the recent transfer from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of logistical and administrative support for all field missions (group 3) in 2005.

29. The budget control procedures of the Department of Political Affairs were not documented. As a result, there was no evidence that a comprehensive review had been performed. Currently, the Department's budgetary control process is carried out at three levels of responsibility: (a) the desk officers of the regional divisions, who provide political and substantive direction to their respective field missions; (b) regional division managers; and (c) the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. The first phase includes a review by desk officers of the budgets submitted by special political missions. OIOS noted that the desk officers assisted in preparing the field mission budgets to ensure conformity with the results-based-budget framework, and that the Department had provided a series of training sessions for the desk officers. However, there was a lack of sufficient documentary evidence showing that their reviews were performed and communicated to the next level of the control process, namely, the managers of the regional divisions. Likewise, there was little evidence to show that the managers of the regional divisions provided guidance and feedback to the desk officers.

30. The third phase of the control process is within the purview of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs, which is responsible for the final budget review at the departmental level to provide a comprehensive analysis of both the individual and consolidated budgets of the field missions. Documentation of budget reviews was also lacking. The staff members who conducted the reviews were actually political affairs officers assigned that responsibility because the Department did not have a dedicated budget officer. Furthermore, OIOS did not find sufficient evidence of a thorough handover of responsibilities during recent changes of the officers responsible for the budget reviews. The Executive Office has two Professional and eight General Service staff members who support the Department's core programme. In addition, the Executive Office provides logistical and administrative support for group 1 and group 2 entities. According to the department, the lack of support account resources, which are available in peacekeeping operations, makes it difficult to provide additional resources for the budgetary control function at the departmental level.

31. Budget control weaknesses, especially at the departmental level, resulted in inadequate justification of budgetary resources. In justifying requests for additional posts, no viable benchmark criteria, such as a workload analysis, were presented. Justifications for official travel in budget submissions also needed to be enhanced; the requests simply stated that official travel from the field missions to New York was required three or four times a year. Consulting costs also lacked detailed justification.

32. Other areas where information and justifications were inadequate included the results-based-budgeting logical framework; performance measures; and

staffing/vacancy management. Similarly, for some special political missions, details were not provided on the inventory and equipment purchased in prior periods.

Lack of annual performance reports and variance analysis of mission budgets

33. Variance analysis is a budgetary control tool that can help to identify areas requiring redistribution of resources and opportunities for future savings. For the entities funded under section 3B of the proposed programme budget (A/60/6 (Sect. 3)), an analysis was conducted biennially in the form of performance reporting, which conformed with the requirements of the financial rules and regulations for the regular budgetary sources. However, OIOS believes that the variance analysis for group 3 field missions should be conducted through annual performance reporting. Given the size of their budgets and their field presence, more stringent controls are required than with the entities in groups 1 and 2. In addition, annual performance reporting would facilitate timely oversight by the Member States of the budgets under section 3B that are requested annually to accommodate their relatively temporary nature.

Extrabudgetary resources are not separately shown in budget proposals

34. Extrabudgetary resources in the form of trust funds amounting to $0.8 million were shown as a lump sum without being allocated to individual entities included under section 3B of the Department's proposed budget (A/60/6 (Sect. 3)). Therefore, special political mission performance reports did not show the performance of funds mobilized by extrabudgetary resources; as a result, the performance of special political missions is not fully communicated to the Member States for their evaluation. In order to improve evaluations and increase transparency, extrabudgetary resources available for a particular mission should be included in its budget presentations and performance reports.

IV. Management and direction by the Department of Political Affairs of special political missions in substantive areas

35. OIOS reviewed the ability of the Department of Political Affairs to manage the substantive and political responsibilities of special political missions on the basis of four elements: adequate and timely backstopping by Department headquarters; timely recruitment of qualified personnel; promulgation of political and substantive policies for use by missions; and equipping Department desk officers with management tools. OIOS found that the Department's ability regarding the first two elements was satisfactory and improving. Special political missions did not express major concerns about the adequacy and timeliness of Department backstopping when responding to the survey conducted by OIOS[3] and during interviews with the selected heads of missions. Although still in need of further enhancement, recruitment has improved as vacancy rates of the missions decreased from 43 per cent in June 2005 to 35 per cent in May 2006. OIOS found, however, that the latter two elements (promulgation of policy guidance and provision of management tools) were weak and required significant improvement, as indicated below.

[3] Three in the context of the present audit and six in the OIOS evaluation (see E/AC.51/2006/4).

Need to strengthen the promulgation of political and substantive policies

36. Some managers of special political missions expressed dissatisfaction with the Department's responsiveness to their requests for political and substantive policies, which they considered important in implementing their mandates. According to the managers, the policies were critical to address political and socio-economic issues facing peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding phases of the countries and regions in which the missions were located. The Department lacked a systematic approach to identifying and addressing such needs. It did not track the number of policies requested by the missions or provided by the Department itself.

37. Furthermore, there was a general weakness in the Department's policy-development capability in the area of peacebuilding, which is part of its mandate. The Policy and Planning Unit had been established to develop policies and coordinate activities to strengthen the Department's policy-formulation capacity in the area of early warning, preventive action, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding within and outside of the United Nations system. In addition, the creation of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate indicates that the Department of Political Affairs might not have the ability to develop major policies for counter-terrorism and peacebuilding. OIOS has been informed that the Policy and Planning Unit, which had been under-resourced for an extended period, was recently strengthened by the General Assembly, and has initiated efforts to develop policy issues related to peacebuilding and mediation, among other areas.

Need to develop standard operating procedures

38. The Department needs to develop a set of standard operating procedures or comprehensive guidelines that equip desk officers with better management tools to strengthen their ability to provide political and substantive direction for special political missions. They should cover policies and procedures, lessons learned and best practices, and should also be periodically updated. Additionally, they should incorporate a communication mechanism between the Department and the missions to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. For example, country assessment reports on Togo were prepared simultaneously by the Department's regional division and a special political mission.

39. Such a set of procedures would help to ensure that all missions receive quality support from the Department. Responses to the OIOS survey and interviews indicated that the quality of the Department's political and substantive direction of the missions was inconsistent. The need for a set of procedures was also apparent because 9 out of 18 desk officers lacked field experience (see E/AC.51/2006/4) and they travelled infrequently to the field owing to budget constraints and the absence of a support account.

Need to develop performance indicators

40. The Department currently measures its effectiveness in providing political and substantive direction for special political missions by the number of complaints from the missions about the effectiveness of its support. According to the Department, no complaints were recorded for the biennium 2004-2005. The number of complaints, however, is not a sufficient indicator for evaluating the effectiveness of the Department's managerial performance. In the opinion of OIOS, the

Department should utilize as its performance indicators mission vacancy rates and the number of policies it promulgates, either by developing them within the Department or by providing linkages to expert capacities within other United Nations and non-United Nations entities, based on the number of policies requested by the missions or identified by the Department. Furthermore, Department performance indicators need to be clearly linked to the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) of desk officers and Department managers responsible for managing missions, since the PAS of desk officers generally lacked specific evaluation criteria.

Need to develop exit strategies for special political missions

41. Sound management practice requires that each stage of a new enterprise with a temporary or limited duration be well planned in advance and have an action plan to be used for management guidance. An exit strategy is considered to be part of this plan. Exit strategies have been developed for only 4 out of the 22 entities shown in tables 1, 2, and 3 above. The strategies were not included, however, in official reports to governing bodies, such as the proposed programme budgets submitted to the General Assembly or the periodic reports to the Security Council. In addition, the strategies were very broad in nature and did not include estimated timelines. The benchmarks contained in the exit strategies were similar to the objectives and expected accomplishments of the results-based-budgeting framework of the special political missions which however are limited to a particular budget period and are not sufficient for an exit strategy. Among the closed missions, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala had developed a detailed transition strategy during the last two years of its mandate. In the view of OIOS, that experience could be used by existing missions as a best practice.

V. Duplication and overlap between the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations

Regional divisions of the Departments

42. The OIOS audit confirmed that there was a certain degree of duplication and overlap in the political affairs functions performed by the regional divisions of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations, although the former characterized that duplication and overlap as "institutionalized" in its self-assessment report submitted to the Deputy Secretary-General in 2002. As a result, resources of the two Departments' regional divisions may be used to perform duplicative tasks or may be excessive for the current level of performance. However, the extent of such duplication and overlap could not be quantified during the current audit because of a lack of measurable performance indicators and outputs at the regional division level. In order to minimize the duplication and overlap of functions, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General needs to review and update the mandates of the two Departments, enhance the lead-department policy and monitor the implementation of a strengthened coordination and cooperation strategy. The Executive Office generally concurred with these proposals; however, as the end-user of the services provided by the regional divisions of both Departments, it stressed that the different views provided by the two Departments were valuable in its decision-making process.

43. The mandates and capacities of the two Departments present an inherent risk of duplication and overlap for the political affairs functions in their regional divisions. Both Departments have been assigned as lead departments for political and substantive operations of field missions. On the basis of their mandates, they perform overlapping functions, such as planning for establishing new field missions and providing political and substantive direction for the field missions.

44. Both Departments have capacities to plan and provide political and substantive direction for field missions in their regional divisions. The Department of Political Affairs has four regional divisions: Africa I, Africa II, the Americas and Europe and Asia and the Pacific. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has three regional divisions in its Office of Operations: Africa; Asia and the Middle East; Europe; and Latin America. The regional division staff of both Departments are political affairs officers with practically identical job descriptions and job qualifications to perform similar tasks. Staff in both Departments carry out political tasks related to the maintenance of international peace and security; direct field missions and deal with Member States; are involved in defining budget resources and in the budget request processes of the field missions; and prepare reports to the Security Council on the work of the field missions. *In that regard, the Departments commented that there was limited duplication or overlap in the functions performed by their Political Affairs Officers. While the job descriptions of the political affairs officers in the two Departments are similar, they carry out different functions. At the same time, the responsibilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are limited to specific operations and countries in which those operations are based. The Department does not have a mandate to analyse or provide advice to the Secretary-General on regional issues that could have an impact on peace and security; that is the core mandate of the Department of Political Affairs. For the two Departments to work smoothly and implement their own core mandates, some overlap of responsibility is to be expected and supported.* While OIOS acknowledges a distinction in the functions of the political affairs officers in the two Departments, it maintains that a certain inherent duplication exists, as discussed above.

45. Furthermore, OIOS noted that another factor increasing the risk of duplication and overlap was the trend in a number of field missions and "integrated" special political missions which include military and police elements and have complex logistical support requirements. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is normally the lead department for such missions. The greater the number of such missions and the longer their duration, the higher the risk of duplication and overlap, as the Department of Political Affairs is concurrently covering those regions and countries as part of its core mandate.

46. The Secretary-General has acknowledged such inherent risks (see A/53/854/Add.1), indicating however that duplication was minimized by the promulgation of the "lead-department" policy, an opinion that most senior managers of both Departments reiterated during the OIOS audit. According to the Secretary-General report, the lead-department policy was promulgated to ensure that lead responsibility was assigned to only one department, on the basis of criteria aligned with the respective mandates of the two departments.

47. In the view of OIOS, however, duplication and overlap are not effectively minimized and are evident when lead-department responsibility is transferred from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in

compliance with a Security Council decision to convert a special political mission to a peacekeeping mission or to change the mandate of a special political mission to include military or other complex elements (as was the case with UNAMA). In such cases, desk officers of the Department of Political Affairs are sometimes temporarily assigned to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that institutional memory for that particular mission is not lost. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations pointed out that the temporary transfer to it of political affairs officers when a special political mission develops into a process led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is not duplicative but simply facilitates a smooth handover. It is also necessary because transferred officers will hand over files and pass on to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations background information critical to understanding the political environment in which the new peacekeeping mission will operate. In such cases, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will be managing an operation that is totally different from the peace negotiations managed by the Department of Political Affairs, as was the case with the special political missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.* In the opinion of OIOS, however, this practice does involve some duplication, unless the purpose of the temporary assignment is to cover surge requirements.

48. Duplication and overlap are also apparent when a peacekeeping mission and a special political mission is established and a special envoy of the Secretary-General is appointed for the same country and are separately led by the two Departments. For example, in Cyprus, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations leads the peacekeeping mission, while the Department of Political Affairs is the lead department for the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus. Similarly, in Western Sahara, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations leads the peacekeeping mission, while the Department of Political Affairs is the lead department for the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Therefore, there are desk officers in both Departments who are responsible for the same country and who must share information and coordinate other activities in order to have the full picture of the situation in the country. The Departments explained that the decision to establish two separate United Nations entities in the same country was based on political reasons. In the opinion of OIOS, the reporting lines and lead-department responsibility for the missions in one country should be vested in one department to the extent possible.

49. In another case, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo was established in 2006, while a separate peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, was already in operation in Kosovo. Although both entities are led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, there is a risk of duplication and overlap at the field level in terms of their work programmes and budget provisions.

50. In the view of OIOS, duplication and overlap exist because the lead-department policy, intended to minimize these problems, lacks transparency and clear criteria for delineating the roles and responsibilities of each Department.

51. Furthermore, the issue of weak cooperation and coordination has been abundantly discussed and identified by both Departments in such documents as the self-assessment report (in 2002) and the minutes of the retreat meeting of the Department of Political Affairs, and in the reform task force report of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Duplicative and overlapping activities of

the Departments' regional divisions may take place but not be detected owing to a lack of quantifiable performance indicators and outputs.

Effective-cooperation and coordination strategy

52. The two key cooperation and coordination strategies stipulated by the Secretary-General, namely co-location of the regional divisions of the two Departments (see A/55/977) and composition of interdepartmental task forces, as required by the guidelines for the implementation of the lead-department concept have not been sufficiently implemented; co-location of the regional divisions has not taken place and the task forces have not always been established.

53. The formal joint task forces, as required by the cooperation and coordination strategy stipulated in the lead-department policy, have rarely been formed and, when they have been, they have lacked terms of reference clearly specifying the responsibilities of members. Informal ad hoc consultation, where success largely depends on personal relationships, was the preferred way of seeking coordination.

54. A recent OIOS comprehensive management audit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations recommended that the Department review the composition and terms of reference for interdepartmental task force/mission deployment working groups and clearly articulate responsibilities including working level decision-making authority (AP2005/600/15/05). The Departments need to ensure that interdepartmental task forces are formed in the course of planning, managing and directing field missions and that relevant terms of reference are developed to clearly specify the responsibilities of members. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that rather than consume limited human resources in developing protocols on such interaction, it expects its political staff to work closely with desk officers of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the same should be expected in that Department.* OIOS notes that dependence on the expectation of staff to work together without established guidelines or protocols can, and has, resulted in ad hoc and inconsistent working arrangements, limiting the effectiveness of the Organization.

55. In that regard, an interdepartmental task force for UNAMI has been formed and is functioning effectively, with the active involvement of and monitoring by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which shared the view of OIOS and indicated that its involvement helped to improve the effectiveness of interdepartmental task forces, as was the case for recent planning activities for Darfur.

56. OIOS believes that effective cooperation and coordination still needs to be addressed. The duplication and overlap discussed above suggest that there may be a need for a review of restructuring options for the Departments, exploring the possibility of a full merger or a change in the current structure, such as combining the functions of planning and political and substantive direction, and separating the logistical and administrative support function. In fact, in a self-assessment report addressed to the Deputy Secretary-General in 2002, the Department of Political Affairs had proposed consideration of a full merger between the two Departments to remedy institutionalized duplication and overlap. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General informed OIOS that the Secretary-General did not envisage performing a restructuring assessment that included the possibility of a full merger or other forms of restructuring of the two Departments.

Potential risk of duplication and overlap between the Department of Political Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office

57. By its resolution 60/180, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish the Peacebuilding Support Office staffed by qualified experts to assist and support the Peacebuilding Commission. However, according to its mandate, the Department of Political Affairs is the focal point for system-wide United Nations peacebuilding efforts. The proposed structure of the Support Office indicated potential duplication and overlap with the Department of Political Affairs, as the working relationship between the Department and the Support Office has not been clarified.

VI. Recommendations

58. OIOS issued a series of recommendations to improve management of special political missions. The Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations generally accepted these recommendations.

Recommendation 1

59. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should propose to the Secretary-General an updated mandate that clearly reflects its responsibilities for directing the substantive operations of the special political missions in addition to peacekeeping operations (AP2006/560/01/01).[4]

60. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation and stated that it would work closely with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other departments to retool the relevant Secretary-General's bulletins as required.*

Recommendation 2

61. The Department of Political Affairs should propose that the Secretary-General update the Department's mandate as the focal point within the United Nations for post-conflict peacebuilding to reflect the recent establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office in order to clarify its responsibilities for managing and directing special political missions (AP2006/560/01/02).

62. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation and stated that it was in discussions with the newly established Peacebuilding Support Office to determine the degree of interaction required between them.*

Recommendation 3

63. The Secretary-General should develop and disseminate clear criteria for assigning the lead responsibility for managing the field missions to ensure transparency so that all parties involved have a clear understanding of their respective operational functions and responsibilities (AP2006/560/01/03).

[4] The symbols in parenthesis in this section refer to an internal code used by OIOS for recording recommendations.

64. *The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not comment on this recommendation. However, the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations concurred with the recommendation, expressing their readiness to work closely with the Office and provide the necessary assistance required in its implementation.*

Recommendation 4

65. The Secretary-General should amend the official mandates of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations to include reference to the lead-department policy in order to enhance its visibility and transparency (AP2006/560/01/04).

66. *The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not comment on this recommendation. However, the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations concurred with this recommendation, stating that, while this was within the purview of the Office, they would provide the assistance required in implementing the recommendation.*

Recommendation 5

67. The Department of Political Affairs should request the Department of Management to revise the current budget presentation by categorizing the entities funded under section 3B in order to clearly indicate the lead-department responsibility for each operation (AP2006/560/01/06).

68. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that it would draw attention of the Department of Management to this recommendation.*

Recommendation 6

69. The Department of Political Affairs should establish a monitoring and oversight mechanism in the form of an operational agreement with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to address accountability for the budget resources of field missions in which the Departments carry out their respective substantive direction and administrative support functions (AP2006/560/01/07).

70. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted the suggestion to establish an operational agreement with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to address accountability for budget resources.*

Recommendation 7

71. The Department of Political Affairs should establish a formal working group for budget review, consisting of the representatives of the Under-Secretary-General, the regional divisions and the Executive Office of the Department (AP2006/560/01/08).

72. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation and informed OIOS that the ad hoc task force had been established. The Department further commented that the representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts would be added to the task force in the next budget cycle.*

Recommendation 8

73. The Department of Political Affairs should request resources in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 to appoint a staff member with budget expertise as the Department's overall focal point for overseeing and monitoring the budgets of the special political missions (AP2006/560/01/09).

74. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation, commenting that it was requesting additional resources for establishing the focal point on budget monitoring.*

Recommendation 9

75. The Department of Political Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Management, should enhance budgetary controls by issuing performance reports of expenditures for the special political missions annually rather than biennially, to ensure that variance analysis is conducted annually (AP2006/560/01/11).

76. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation, commenting that it would draw the issue to the attention of the Department of Management.*

Recommendation 10

77. The Department of Political Affairs should develop a set of standard operating procedures that provides desk officers with better management tools and increases the quality and consistency of the Department's support for special political missions (AP2006/560/01/14).

78. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation, commenting that it would cooperate with the Best Practices Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that the best thinking from the United Nations was reflected in any such policy tools.*

Recommendation 11

79. The Department of Political Affairs should strengthen its performance evaluation of special political mission management activities by utilizing the number of policies it addresses for use by the missions and their staffing vacancy rates as performance indicators in the Department's results-based-budgeting framework, and clearly link them with the Performance Appraisal System of desk officers and their managers (AP2006/560/01/15).

80. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that it would consider how best to strengthen its performance evaluation of special political mission management in conjunction with OIOS findings and other studies related to results-based-budgeting and performance measures.*

Recommendation 12

81. The Department of Political Affairs should develop exit strategies for all special political missions and present them in the proposed programme budgets to the General Assembly and periodic reports to the Security Council (AP2006/560/01/16).

82. *The Department of Political Affairs accepted this recommendation, commenting that the development of an exit strategy for each special political mission would be considered on a case-by-case basis, although, as a general principle, mission managers would be asked to develop exit strategies and scenarios.*

Recommendation 13

83. The Department of Political Affairs should develop, in coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a working level methodology for establishing interdepartmental task forces and relevant terms of reference specifying functional responsibilities in managing the field missions (AP2006/560/01/18).

84. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that this recommendation was for the consideration of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. OIOS notes that the terms of reference specifying responsibilities of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations in the interdepartmental task forces should be developed at the working level by both Departments, in coordination with the Office. OIOS stresses that the Department of Political Affairs should lead implementation of the recommendation.*

Recommendation 14

85. The Secretary-General should ensure that his strategy of forming interdepartmental task forces as promulgated in the lead-department policy is being implemented effectively, thereby improving cooperation and coordination between the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations (AP2006/560/01/19).

86. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not provide comments on this recommendation.

Recommendation 15

87. The Department of Political Affairs, in coordination with the Peacebuilding Support Office, should develop terms of reference that specify their respective roles and responsibilities in peacebuilding activities and formulate a coordination strategy to prevent possible duplication and overlap (AP2006/560/01/20).

88. *The Department of Political Affairs commented that it was discussing the issue with the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Department also commented that the Policy Committee meeting would be held on the terms of reference for the Office, which would be followed by revision of the Secretary-General's bulletin to indicate respective roles and responsibilities of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office.*

(*Signed*) Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
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